

CITY OF ROCKVILLE
Department of Recreation and Parks

March, 2008

Dear Parents,

Greetings from the City of Rockville Recreation and Parks Department. The staff welcome you and your family to the softball program.

I. **Purpose**

The purpose of this league is to provide a safe, fun and wholesome recreational and learning experience to the players. League rules that address rules of conduct for players, coaches and spectators are distributed to all coaches at the beginning of each season. A key responsibility of every coach is to make sure that these rules are reviewed and understood by all team members and parents. Players and parents sign a Player Agreement in which they acknowledge this understanding of these rules. Expectations for behavior of the coaches and parents spectators are also covered in the Coaches and Spectator Code of Ethics. Copies of each of these important documents are available from the Sports Office – 240-314-8620.

Given the recent national media attention to inappropriate behavior by coaches, parents and players in youth sports, we wish you to know that we will be setting a very low tolerance level for any behavior that is unacceptable according to league rules, Codes of Ethics, or common sense.

Bottom line, all the adults in their various roles are expected to be role models for the children and young adults in the softball program. Players are expected to play by the rules and treat each other, their coaches and the officials with dignity and respect. If everyone will keep these objectives in mind, this season – and every season – will close out as an outstanding success.

II. **General League Organization**

All of the teams in the league are coached either by volunteer parents, brothers, sisters, neighbors, or just interested individuals. During the 2007 season, 28 teams were coached by such individuals. Coaches assume a great responsibility and need your honest support and understanding.

Teams are organized by neighborhood/school district and age. This year the age divisions are as follows:

Pee Wee (Girls Only) Coach Pitch Softball	Youth born 1998 & 1999
Midget Division (Girls Only)	Youth born 1996 & 1997
Junior Division (Girls Only)	Youth born 1994 & 1995
Associates Division (Girls Only)	Youth born 1991, 1992, 1993

Children must play in the division corresponding to their year of birth!

The discount registration program fee for city residents is \$64 and \$74 for student residents, non-resident attending schools within the Rockville city limits. Fee includes a uniform-style shirt and stirrup socks for each participant.

Practice time is allocated by the Recreation and Parks Department with the goal of providing each team with two practices per week, once during the week, and once on Saturday. All practices are scheduled at Rockville parks and schools. Generally, there is no practice when the schools are closed for holidays.

Coaches are provided with basic team equipment; however, players must provide their own gloves. Some teams may have sponsors who provide monies for shorts, hats, and other accessories.

III. **Schedule of Play**

League play will begin the week of April 12th, at Mark Twain School Athletic Park and other Rockville Parks and School Fields. Girl's player-pitch teams, will play one or two weeknight games, in addition to Saturdays at various Rockville parks. The season will last approximately 6-8 weeks, ending around the time schools close for the summer. In the girls player pitch divisions, tournaments will be conducted at the end of the regular season to determine league champions. Check your schedules and tentative tournament dates. These dates should serve as your guide to program commitments. (*Inclement weather may alter these dates.*)

IV. **Umpires**

All games are officiated by adults who have attended umpire clinics conducted by the City of Rockville. Our umpires try to call a fair game. The Rockville umpires earn approximately \$25 per game, depending on the level of play.

Players, coaches, friends, and spectators are expected to treat the umpires with respect and patience. It is important that coaches and spectators set a good example for the players, especially when umpires make questionable calls. Umpires' calls do not win or lose a game; players make many more mistakes during games than umpires.

V. **Playing Rules**

The softball program has special playing rules which govern player participation. Equal play is promoted in all league play. All team players in attendance at games and entered in the scorebook should participate equally in every game unless a child has a health-related issue or does not attend practices or games. Most of the leagues have specific rules of which you, as a parent should be aware.

A. The following rules apply to all leagues and divisions of play:

- I. ASA slow pitch rules apply, except as amended by the league by-laws.
2. Rubber molded cleats or tennis shoes are required.
3. All catchers are required to wear a mask and throat protector.

B. The following rules apply to the **all divisions**:

1. Wildcat Batting - All players shall be included in a rotational batting order that shall be used throughout the game.
2. A team will remain at bat until either ten (10) batters have completed their turns at bat or three outs are made, whichever comes first.
(No batter may bat twice in the same inning).
3. All players must play defense for at least six outs.
The infield fly rule will not apply to the Pee Wee, Coach Pitch, Midget & Junior divisions.

VI. **Parent's Responsibilities**

The Recreation and Parks Department, the coaches, the umpires, and especially the players, need your support and understanding during the games. Fans and spectators can be the greatest asset or the greatest detriment to a program.

Many parents enjoy watching their children compete in sports. Sometimes, this involvement produces intense and anxious moments and the parent's behavior becomes embarrassing to other parents, officials, and more importantly, to their own children. Parents are encouraged to watch their children participate, provided their behavior meets acceptable standards such as the following:

- A. Parents should stand or remain seated in their team's spectator area during the contest.
- B. Parents should not shout instructions or criticisms to the children.
- C. Parents should not make derogatory comments to players, coaches, or other parents about the opposing team or officials.
- D. Parents must not interfere with their child's coach. They must be willing to relinquish the responsibility for their child to the coach for the period of the contest.

Responsibility of the Coach: It is the responsibility of the coach to control his own behavior and that of his assistant(s) and spectators. No coach or spectator may enter the field without recognition and permission from the umpire.

Parents will be required to read and sign a "Parents' Code of Ethics" which has been developed and prepared by the National Youth Sports Coaches Association. These signed pledges should be returned to your child's coach.

The guiding principle for parents is that nothing in their behavior should detract from any child's enjoyment of the sport. Remember, as parents, you have a good opportunity to teach sportsmanship. Kids will imitate not only what you say, but what you do.

While parents must not interfere with their child's coach during the ordinary course of games and practices, parents continue to have primary responsibility for their child. ***You are expected to get your child to each practice and game on time, and to pick up your child promptly after each session.*** Please do not allow your children to be transported in an open pick-up truck for safety reasons. Parents are strongly encouraged to stay and observe their child and to assist the coach, if asked.

All head coaches and many assistant coaches have participated in a coaches' training program. The National Youth Sports Coaches Association (NYSCA), a Coaches' Certification program, gives instruction on the psychology of coaching youth sports, how to improve performance through proper conditioning, first aid, and a variety of techniques for organizing practices. NYSCA has established and printed a code of ethics pledge which coaches sign. It requires coaches, among other things, to act in a sportsmanlike and fair way towards opponents and officials. Coaches are constantly being observed and evaluated for conformance with the code of ethics.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Each child is important! Through programs like the Rockville Softball League, youth have the opportunity to experience teamwork, participate in a sport, and come to know their teammates and opponents as people.

We hope that you, as parents, will accentuate the positive. Research has shown that children who have positive reinforcement have higher self-esteem at the end of the season, and tend to remember the program as one filled with fun and enjoyment.

Sincerely,

Chuck Miller
Sports Program Supervisor

Lisa Splaine
Assistant Sports Program Supervisor

Lou Clark
Sports Specialist

Please complete "The Agreement to Participate/Release Form" which should accompany this letter, and return it to your child's coach. Don't forget to read and sign the "Parents' Code of Ethics" which also is returned to your child's coach.